U.S. Shifting Its Intelligence Strategy

The Sunday Star D

WASHINGTON, D. C., MARCH 8, 1970

By ORR KELLY
Star Staff Writer

The American intelligence community is in the midst of its most sweeping realignment since the one that followed the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961.

One chief aim is to save money by increasing efficiency. But another major purpose is to prepare for a markedly changed world situation that might emerge from the strategic arms limitation talks.

If the talks, scheduled to resume April 16 in Vienna, are successful, much of the intelligence now gathered the hard way at great expense may become readily available, according to high-ranking government officials. At the same time, the nation's safety then may depend even more heavily on the accuracy of intelligence activities designed to make sure the agreement is kept.

Masterminding the effort to get ready for the changes is a three-man National Intelligence Resources Board. The board was set up in 1968 by Richard Helms, in his role as director of central intelligence, but it is just now getting into high gear.

Chairman of the board is Marine Lt. Gen. Robert E. Cushman Jr., who became deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency last April after commanding Marine units in Vietnam.

The other two members are Ray Cline, a former CIA man who now heads the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and Robert F. Froehlke, assistant secretary of defense for administration.

Cushman, Cline and Froehlke meet whenever there is something to do—sometimes once a week, sometimes not for two or three weeks—in the CIA offices in Langley, Va.

The most visible change so far in the nation's intelligence operations is the emergence of Froehlke as one of the most influential members of the intelligence community.

A little more than a year ago, he was an insurance company executive in Boston with no more knowledge of intelligence than a casual reader of James Bond thrillers. Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, a boyhood friend, brought him to Washington as his deputy for administration.

Last April, Laird asked Froehlke to take a look at defense intelligence activities and suggest what should be done. Laird strongly supported creation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, following the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961, but had since become concerned that the mammoth DIA was not working as well as it should.

Froehlke's major recommendation was that an assistant secretary of defense be put in charge of management of the whole intelligence operation—and Laird made Froehlke his special assistant for intelligence.

Froehlke also took over as a member of the National Intelligence Resources Board in place of the head of the Defense Intelligence Agency and set up a new deputy assistant secretaryship for intelligence in his office.

That office was filled in November with the appointment of Vice Adm. H. G. Bowen Jr., a Naval Academy graduate whose staff of 12 intelligence professionals may soon be expanded to 14.

"I'm not an expert on intelligence and I am not technically oriented at all," Froehlke says. "I'm strictly a manager. Adm. Bowen's background is both technical and that of a user of intelligence."

At the same time that control over defense intelligence has been centralized, the two biggest Pentagon intelligence units acquired new chiefs as the result of retirements.

Lt. Gen. Donald V. Bennett, a 54-year-old West Pointer with a brilliant Army career, became head of the Defense Intelligence Agency last summer, replacing Air Force Lt. Gen. Joseph F. Carroll, who had headed the agency since it was created in 1961.

And Vice Adm. Noel Gayler, 54, a Naval Academy graduate, left his post as deputy director of the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., to become head of the National Security Agency, replacing Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter, former deputy director of CIA.

In the last two years, the defense intelligence operation, which controls about 85 percent of the nation's intelligence resources, has come under sharp criticism in Congress, much of it from the House Defense Appropriations subcommittee, of which Laird formerly was a member. Two years ago, a group of staff investigators put together a scathing report on operations of the DIA.

In his posture statement to Congress this year, Laird said he found "intelligence activities diffused, with management overlapping or nonexistent" and listed five critical problems:

Intelligence was being evaluated poorly, various activities overlapped, there was no long-range plan, significant gaps in intelligence gathering went unnoticed and the "intelligence community failed to maintain frank and unrestricted internal channels of communication."

DIA is not primarily a collector of intelligence, although it is responsible for more than a thousand military attaches who openly gather information in foreign countries. DIA's primary job is to pull together information gathered by other agencies, such as military intelligence offices and the NSA, and interpret it to the defense secretary and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The NSA, which has a large headquarters building at Ft. Meade, Md., was formed in 1952 "for the performance of highly specialized technical functions in support of the intelligence activities of the United States." Much of its work deals with making and breaking codes.

However valid the criticism — and it is impossible for an outsider to judge — Froehlke is confident that impressive steps are being taken to improve the situation.

"Part of it is simple, human things," he said. "Every Friday morning at 7:30, Mel (Laird), Dave (Deputy Defense Secretary Dave Packard) and I and the heads of the inteligence agencies have breakfast and discuss our problems. Once a month, the heads of the service intelligence agencies come to breakfast.

"In the past, months might go without these people talking to each other."

Froehlke has been quite open discussing intelligence operations. He recently sat in his Pentagon office and talked with a reporter on the record for about an hour.

"We managers have to find legitimate ways of saying we are doing a good job," he said. "We would still lose any vote of confidence in Congress. We have to improve our product — and then sell it."

There still are great barriers to public knowledge of the workings of the intelligence community — some of them mystifying.

Last year, for example, DIA told Congress it needed $75 million or, if military pay is included $112 million to finance its operations in the 1970 fiscal year. This would support a staff of about 3,500 civilians and 2,776 military men.

No comparable figures were available for the NSA, nor for the service intelligence and cryptological operations. The DIA figure did, however, give some indication of the scope of defense intelligence.

This year, the same kind of information about DIA — budget and number of employes — is classified.

The 1971 Defense Department budget requests a total of $5.2 billion for intelligence and communications — a drop of about $500 million from the 1969 figure.

Even though intelligence cannot be separated meaningfully from communications, it is clear from conversations with informed officials that the figure for intelligence is very large — and that it is being cut rather sharply.

"The services have taken a signficant cut in intelligence resources," Froehkle said." "They have made some cuts where it hurts, although they have tried to cut where it hurts the least."

Much of the effort of the NIRB headed by Cushman is now focused on trying to make a list — actually a computer data base — of the nation's intelligence resources so intelligent judgments can be made about what is available and how important it is.

Even before the change in administrations, however, the CIA had been moving, in cooperation with State and Defense, toward that goal. Work had started on setting up what was then called a "Target Oriented Display" on computers at CIA.

The name has now been changed to the Consolidated Intelligence Resource Information System (CIRIS), which Laird described to Congress as "the necessary, visible starting point from which to evaluate intelligence resources and what they are doing."